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## Japan

### Market Development Reports

### Japan Food Trends November 2008

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**Report Highlights:**

Fashion show models develop soup product with major Japanese food company. New products, packaging ideas and other Japanese food market trends are covered in this issue.

Japan Food Trends (JFT) communicates Japanese food and lifestyle trends that may help U.S. exporters to generate product and marketing ideas.

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Includes PSD Changes: No  
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[JA]

## Editor's Notes

Fashion show business and product development brought together two very different teams. One was a team of fashion models. The other was a product development team from Japan's largest food company. Although the language is Japanese you probably will be able to follow along the websites attached in the write-up. Other collaborative work involved university students and convenient stores and a food company and a home appliance manufacturer. Cross merchandising is nothing new, but the combinations are intriguing. There is an abundant amount of creativity in Japan and I hope you enjoy these food trends.

## Collaborative Marketing

**Tokyo Girls Collection and Product Development: Ajinomoto** *Shokuhin Sangyo*  
*Shimbun*, November 10, 2008, p2 and Tokyo Girls Collection homepage

Major food company, Ajinomoto Co., Inc., teamed up with hugely successful fashion show group, Tokyo Girls Collection, to develop a new product to add to Ajinomoto's successful soup pasta series.

Six models were selected for the project team. The models participated in taste tests, factory visits and offered their suggestions to Ajinomoto's product development team. The collaboration extended to the product launch and marketing, as you can view in Tokyo Girls Collection website, <http://soup-pasta.com/pc/> (homepage <http://gw.tv/fw/shop/tgc/08AW/whats/>). The model project team introduced the soup pasta at their fashion shows and various promotional events. This was the second soup pasta that the models helped develop, so I'm sure it must be successful.



From Tokyo Girls Collection website

It's not only the fashion models that are being tapped on the shoulder for their expertise. University students are also getting involved.

**Bento (boxed meal) Menu Developed From University Student Ideas** *Nikkei MJ*,  
 October 22, 2008, p5

Two of the major convenient store chains, Lawson and Family Mart, developed *bentos* from ideas generated by university students. Lawson sent flyers out to university students soliciting their ideas for *bentos*. Out of 500 suggestions, two were selected for limited time offerings. Both ideas were large volume oriented, because the groups that suggested the recipes were wrestlers from *Nihon Taiku* (Athletic) University and basketball players from *Kansai University*.



Another set of bento meals produced by rival convenient store, Family Mart, were designed by students from women's universities. In contrast to a high volume and high cholesterol menu the women opted for a more healthy combination, one of which was a Keema curry over *go-koku-mai*(? ? ?). *Go-koku-mai* means "five-cereal-rice". It is a mixture of rice, wheat, foxtail millet, soybean, millet. The menu name of another healthy *bento* meal was Tofu and Mushroom Gratin.

***Cross-Industry Merchandising, Nikkei MJ, October 3, 2008, p15***

Vegetable food company, Kagome, and home appliance manufacturer, Sharp, put together a marketing campaign that would bring Kagome's "Tomato Sauce" product to the home appliance floor room and Sharp's microwave oven to the shelves of supermarkets. This annual campaign will allow sales people from both companies promote their products over 1,000 times throughout Japan. POPs show both products and company information. Thus, creating a greater exposure to a different customer base.

This was the first time for both companies to cross market with a completely different industry sector.

**Packaging*****Just a Bit is Just Right, Nikkei Shimbun, October 11, 2008 p35***

Homemakers are happy to see palm size snack packets hanging in stores. Snack manufacturers have increased the number of snack items that package only 10-15 grams of product in a very small packet. That is a really small amount. The bottom label of the first packet and the top label of the second packet are strung together with a perforation in the middle. Three to five of these packets are strung in this manner and they are hung instead of laid on the shelf.

"These small portion packets are great for my children, because I can give them these instead of the big size bags" said a concerned homemaker. Adults who are concerned about overeating seem to also benefit from the small packet sizes.

According to the article, sales of these small packet products have increased 60% compared to last year.

***Trust and Honesty of Font Design, Nikkei MJ, October 15, 2008, p18***

Many company and product logos use "Helvetica" font. A chewing gum brand, "ACUO", used Helvetica for its product logo and received the Good Design award in 2007. ACUO helps keep teeth white and the entire package has a medicinal look. According to the writer, Helvetica offers an orthodox style and a perception of trust and honesty. Helvetica font is also used by companies such as Toyota, Panasonic, Mujirushi Ryouhin.



Lotte's Acuo gum



Muji clothing and home furnishings

## Functional Foods

**Nutritional Snack Bars**, *Nikkei MJ*, October 20, 2008, p2

In 2007, ATO Japan researched the functional and health food market and concluded that it would continue to be growth market in Japan. Although this particular article only discusses nutritional snack bars, sales for this category increased 32.5% from the previous year to reach approximately US\$340 billion (36.8 billion Yen) in 2007 and are predicted to grow. A survey provided the following reasons for the increase.

1. Nutritional snack bars offer a convenient way to satisfy in-between meal hunger
2. Substitute for meals when time doesn't allow for a regular meal
3. More new to market companies
4. Increased number of new-to-market products

## New and Fun Products in the Market

**Krispy Kreme's White rum-soaked raisin donut**: Japan Today website



Featuring Californian raisins, this donut was specially developed for the Thanksgiving season. By the way, Krispy Kreme just opened another outlet in Kawasaki City, which is just south of Tokyo. One customer waited in line for five and half hours on opening day.

Source: Japan Today website

**Green Apple Fanta**: Japan Today website

According to the article, Coca Cola Japan says that green apple is one of the most popular flavors.



Source:  
Japan Today website

**Starbucks Introduces Filone Sandwiches**: Japan Today website

For the past three years or so, Starbucks Coffee Japan has offered a variety of cookies, muffins, sandwiches and various food items. Now they offer three new sandwiches, beef pastrami, vegetable & chicken, and ham & maribo cheese tucked into Filone bread.



Source: Japan Today website

